

Washington State Ferries Long-Range Strategic Plan



Tuesday, June 14, 2005
Bainbridge Island, Bainbridge Commons
Bjune Avenue
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.



Introduction

Purpose of Tonight's Meeting

- Share information on key challenges facing WSF – ridership growth, terminal and vessel capacity constraints, boat waiting times, roadway traffic impacts, financial constraints.
- Discuss specific service choices for addressing key chokepoints and bottlenecks.
- Answer questions and obtain input on the strategic choices.

Why is WSF Updating its Long-Range Strategic Plan?

- WSF's last Plan was completed in 1999 – much has changed since, including the Legislature's implementation of the I-695 funding cuts, which significantly reduced funding for WSF operations.
- The Ferries are already full on many sailings and more growth is coming.
- The System has aging vessels and terminals which need upgrading just to keep pace with current demand.
- WSF must determine how to best serve the public given all of the System's needs and limited financial resources.
- Communities' plans, and WSF's plans for service and investments, are related.

Why Do We Need a Plan?

The WSF Plan will become a part of the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP), scheduled for adoption by the end of 2005. The WTP is required by state law, and will form the basis for setting the state transportation system's investment priorities.

Why Plan Now for 2011 and Beyond?

Ferry service improvements take time to implement. Because of long lead times required for building new vessels and improving terminals, and the long-term nature of such investments, WSF is planning now for the service it will provide in 2011-2030.



When Will the Plan Take Effect, and What Will it Do?

When the Plan is completed in December 2005, it will guide future WSF decisions on services and investments:

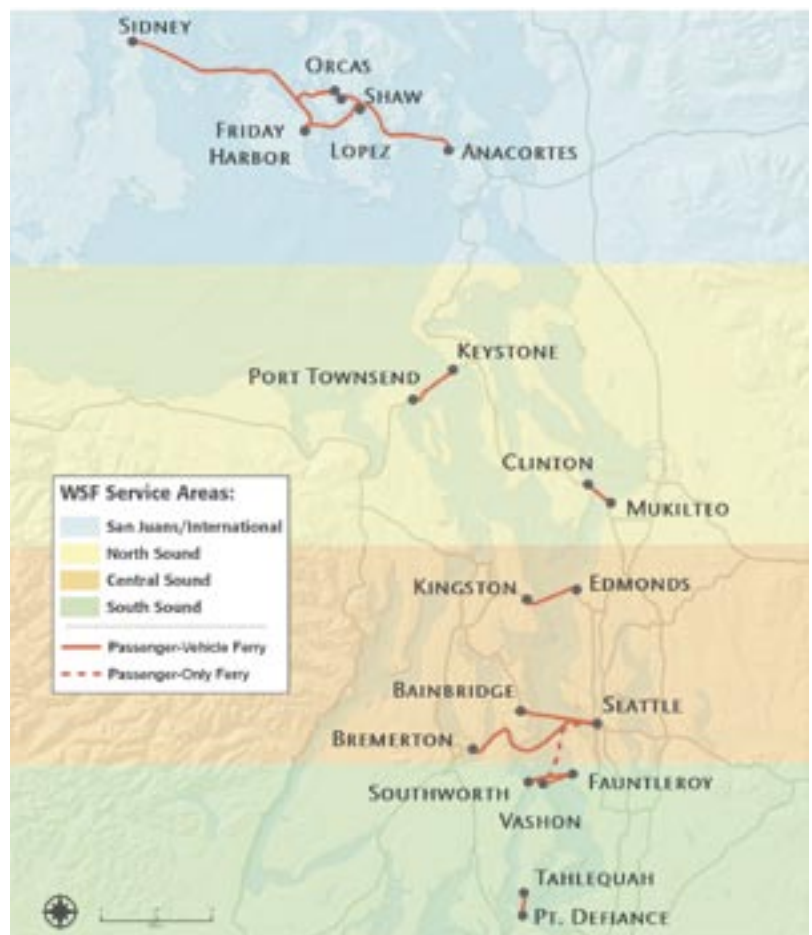
- **Services:** it will have a route-specific program including route structures, frequencies and carrying capacities.
- **Investments:** it serves as a 25-year strategic investment plan for vessel and terminal improvements.



WSF is making investments now in vessels and terminals, based on its current Capital Program.

- New vessels have been ordered to replace older vessels that are being retired.
- Preservation work and improvements are being planned for terminals at Anacortes, Bainbridge Island, Port Townsend and Mukilteo, on varying schedules beginning in 2005.
- The Eagle Harbor Maintenance facility requires major repairs to continue efficient upkeep of WSF vessels and terminals. Construction will run from mid-2005 through mid-2009.

Washington State Ferries Routes by Service Area





Multiple Constraints Affect WSF's Ability to Handle Growth

WSF is a Financially Constrained System

- Significant limits on its financial resources require WSF to look closely at the operating and capital costs of any possible choice.

Systemwide Chokepoints and Bottlenecks Constrain WSF's Capacity and Efficiency

- **Fauntleroy Terminal:** Operates at capacity now and is not able to accommodate projected growth in demand from Vashon/Southworth. Expanding the terminal is not an option, according to the City of Seattle.
- **Colman Dock** in downtown Seattle is a hub for the system. WSF is studying options for a new facility on the site to improve operating efficiencies and accommodate increasing demand.
- **Central Sound Passenger Service:** High growth in passenger demand is expected on Central Sound routes.
- **Weekends/Summer Season:** Continuing growth in the recreational travel market on weekends and during the summer on Edmonds-Kingston, Whidbey Island routes and Anacortes-San Juan Islands routes presents capacity challenges in those corridors.
- **San Juan Islands** terminal constraints include one-slip terminals in the Islands and the limited ability of adjacent road systems to handle ferry traffic.

Landside Constraints are Major Factors

- Traffic congestion issues in downtown Seattle and at Fauntleroy will be major issues for the City of Seattle.
- SR 305 on Bainbridge Island has significant capacity and congestion issues that will be considered in the Plan.
- Impacts of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge are also considered.
- Single-slip and single-lane loading at the San Juan Islands Terminals.
- Multimodal terminals at Anacortes, Edmonds, and Mukilteo are being designed to mitigate many of the current landside impacts on these communities.



Systemwide Growth Expectations

- WSF's "baseline" growth projections rely on certain assumptions about service and fares:
 - Service is assumed to be the same as today's, except for the introduction of replacement vessels already purchased.
 - Fares are assumed to continue increasing 5% per year through 2009, with annual increases to match inflation thereafter.
- Given those assumptions, significant growth in ferry ridership is projected through 2030.
 - Westbound vehicle traffic during the evening commute period is projected to rise 24% (1,629 additional vehicles) by 2030.
 - Westbound total ridership during the evening commute period is projected to rise 64% (11,015 additional passengers) by 2030.

What do ridership projections take into account?

WSF's projections of future ridership are based on a combination of a regional computer model developed by the Puget Sound Regional Council and population data supplied by the Office of Financial Management (OFM) for outlying counties. It includes origin and destination information for all cross-Sound trips, based on population and employment projections. Projections about commuters' decisions also take into account a variety of factors including vessel capacities, driving times and fares.

Historical Context of Systemwide Growth

- Between 1987 and 1999, systemwide ferry ridership grew by approximately 50%, as a result of population growth and relatively flat fares (fares declined in inflation-adjusted terms.)
- Since 1999, ridership has declined about 10% throughout the system, a result of the service cutbacks and fare increases that followed voter approval of the tax limits in Initiative 695.
- As of 2004, systemwide ridership was at a similar level as in 1994.
- Future population growth west of Puget Sound is expected to increase demand for ferry service.

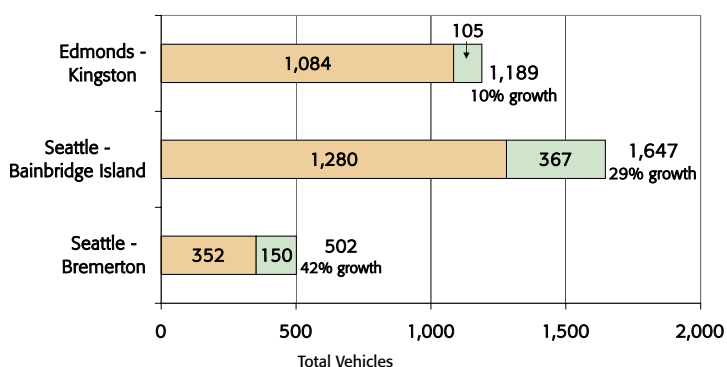
Growth in the Central Sound

- Both vehicle traffic and total passenger ridership are projected to experience significant growth by 2030.

Central Sound Vehicles in 2003 and Projected 2030

4-Hour PM Westbound Commuting Peak

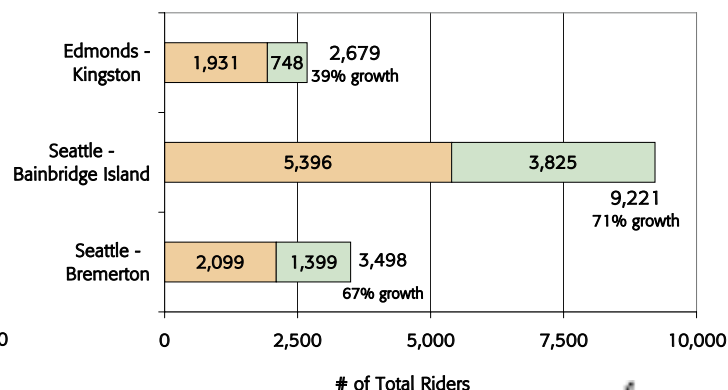
2003 Growth from 2003 to 2030



Central Sound Total Ridership in 2003 and Projected 2030

4-Hour PM Westbound Commuting Peak

2003 Growth from 2003 to 2030





Central Sound Corridor: Challenges and Choices

Key Challenges are Growth-Related

- Vehicle traffic on the Seattle-Bremerton and Seattle-Bainbridge routes is projected to grow significantly by 2030 (42% and 29%, respectively).
- Total ridership (vehicle drivers, foot passengers, and passengers in vehicles) on the Bremerton and Bainbridge routes is also expected to grow significantly, with 67% more riders on Bremerton and 71% on Bainbridge by 2030.
- Level of service standards will be challenged:
 - State transportation policy states that walk-on passengers should have a 0-boat wait. This standard effectively applies to total passengers.
 - Total passenger ridership is projected to outpace this standard by 2013 on Bremerton and by 2015 on Bainbridge – assuming current or planned seated capacity.

Current WSF Central Sound Routes



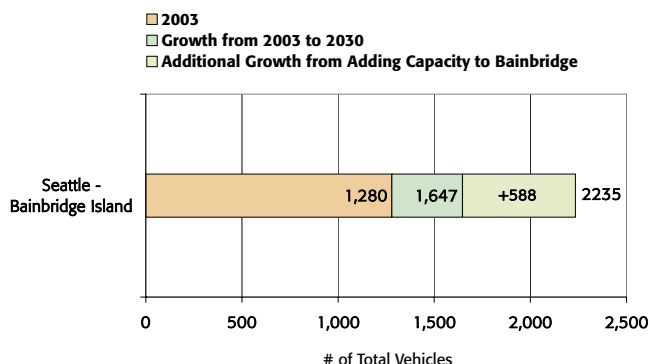
The Bainbridge Challenge

- If vehicle capacity were added to the Seattle-Bainbridge route, it would attract more vehicles to that route creating more congestion on SR 305 instead of improving ferry waits.

Central Sound Vehicles in 2003 and Projected 2030

4-Hour PM Westbound Commuting Peak

Added Bainbridge Service

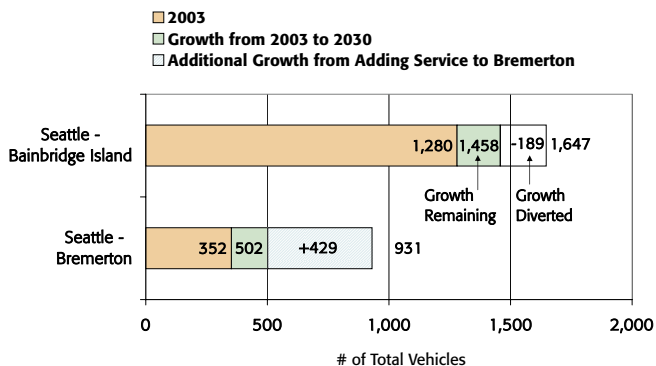


- Some of the Bainbridge growth could be diverted by adding more frequent service to Seattle-Bremerton or Edmonds-Kingston:

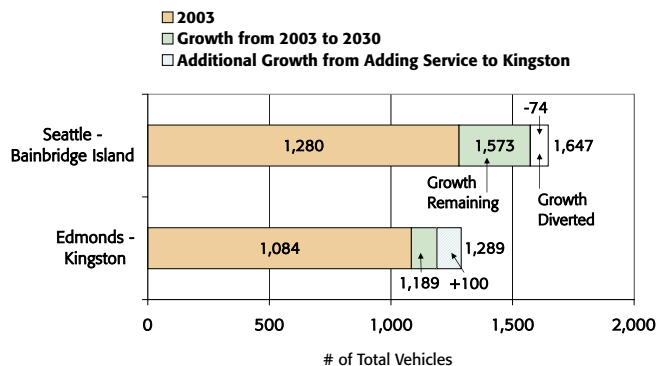
Central Sound Vehicles in 2003 and Projected 2030

4-Hour PM Westbound Commuting Peak

Added Bremerton Service



Added Kingston Service

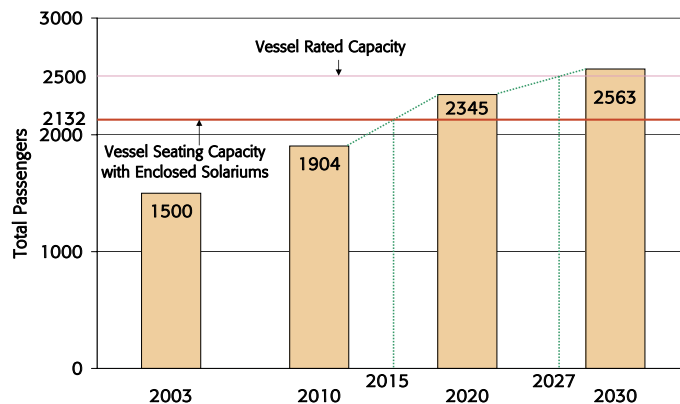


Choices for Passenger Capacity in the Seattle-Bainbridge Route

Increase capacity by adding seats to the existing Mark II boats

- Current seated capacity on this vessel class is 1,732; the Coast Guard rated capacity is 2,500.
- Vessel improvements to enclose the upstairs solariums would increase capacity to 2,132.
- WSF is exploring the feasibility of raising the seating capacity to 2,500 passengers and the overall rated capacity to 3,000.

Seattle-Bainbridge Peak-of-Peak Sailing (5:30 PM)



Address passenger growth on the Bainbridge route by diverting it to a new passenger-only service from Seattle to Kingston

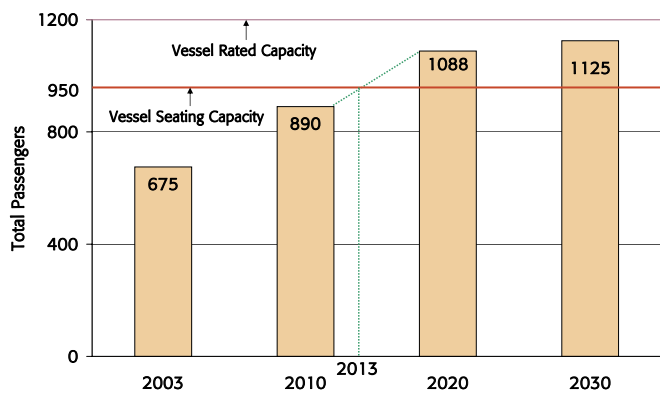
- A passenger-only service would reduce Westbound PM peak passengers on Seattle-Bainbridge by 1,666 compared to the baseline projection for 2030, (a reduction of 18%) if the passenger-only fares were held to no higher than the Central Sound fares and 3-boat service (30 minute frequency) was offered. Diverted traffic drops to 1,574 if passenger-only fares are 1.5 times Central Sound fares.
- The resulting reduction in Bainbridge ridership would be sufficient to delay the passenger capacity issue to the 2025-2030 time period.

Choice for the Seattle-Bremerton Route

Swap the Expanded Issaquah class vessel for a larger vessel with seated capacity for 1200 or more passengers

- Current seated capacity on the Expanded Issaquah class vessel that serves the Seattle-Bremerton route is 800 passengers. This vessel is scheduled to be replaced by 2010 with one of the new vessels which will have seating for 950. When demand for ferry service from passengers exceeds this capacity, another vessel in the WSF system with 1200 or more seats could be substituted. The existing Super class vessels in WSF's fleet seat approximately 1500.
- If the Southworth passenger-vehicle is ferry ultimately connected to downtown instead of Fauntleroy, it could also accommodate some of the growth that otherwise could go to Seattle-Bremerton. This could delay the need to further upsize passenger capacity to Bremerton or add vehicle capacity.

Seattle-Bremerton Peak-of-Peak Sailing (5:30 PM)

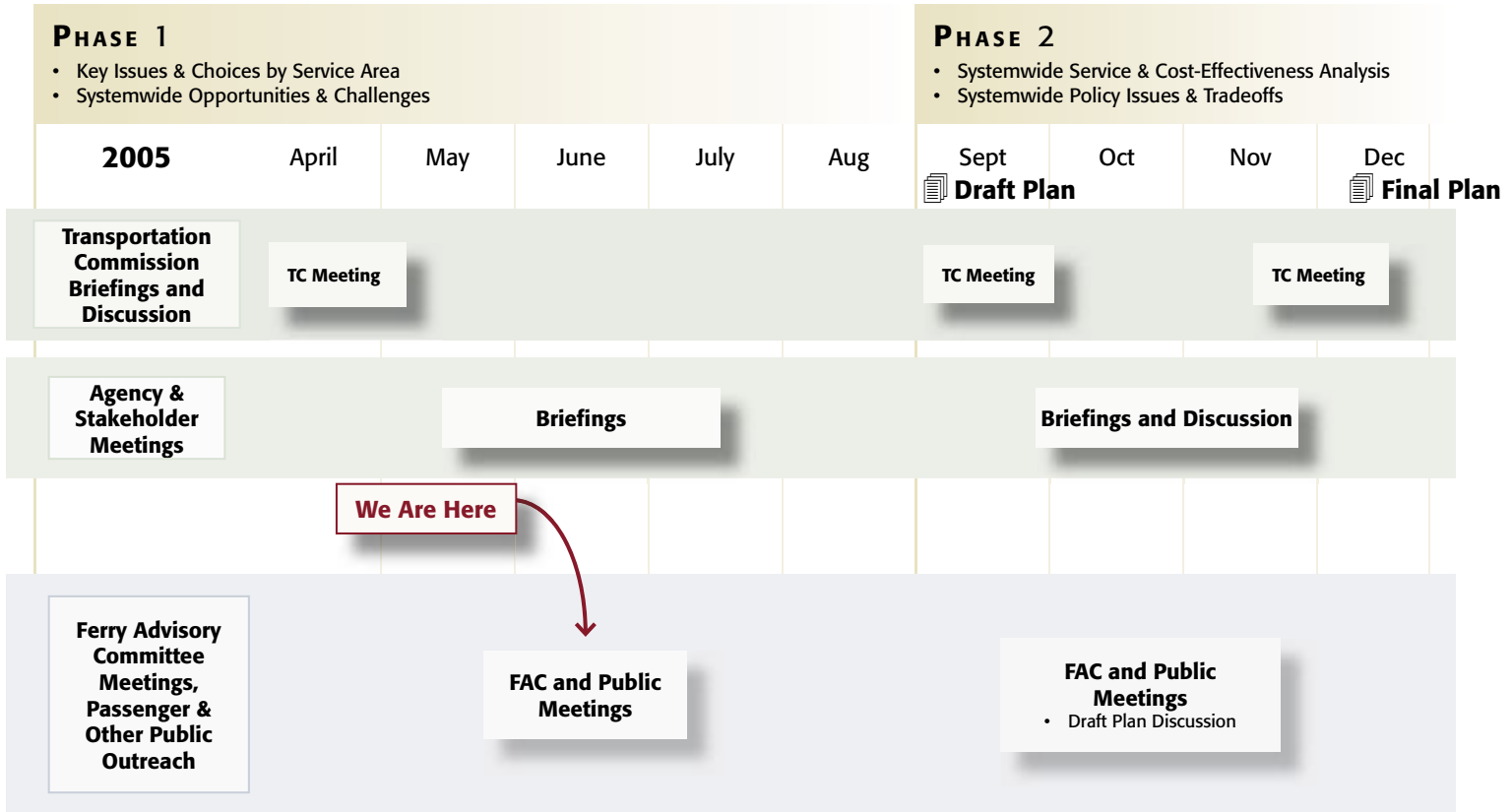


Edmonds-Kingston Route

- Initial weekday peak forecasts indicate a growth rate of 10% by 2030.
- Revised population forecasts could increase demand another 14%.
- If no further vehicle capacity is added for Seattle-Bainbridge, then weekend recreation demand needs to be accommodated through Edmonds-Kingston and requires the addition of a third vessel.



Project Schedule and Opportunities for More Input



Next Steps

- Opportunity for comment on the Draft Plan in the fall
- Project updates will be available at
http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/your_wsf/corporate_communications/LongRangePlan.htm
- E-mail questions and comments to wsfplanning@wsdot.wa.gov
- Questions by phone: 1-888-808-7977